

Firestorm 1991

A dry and warm summer and early fall helped set the stage for a fire in mid-October near Hauser Lake. By October 15, there had been no rain for 42 days (House 1996). Several small fires caused by downed power lines were fanned into a firestorm on the 16th. Neighboring Spokane County suffered the most damage with 92 wildfires consuming 35,000 acres and causing 2 deaths and \$15 million in damage. (Barker 1996).

2000 Wildland Fire Season

The 2000 wildland fire season was the worst since 1910 (U. S. Fire Administration 2000a). 15 firefighters were killed. 7 million acres were burned and losses exceeded \$10 billion dollars. Total suppression costs for all federal agencies in 2000 were \$1,362,367,000, 4 times the average over the previous 7 years (National Interagency Fire Center 2002). Over 2 million of these acres were located in Central Idaho and Western Montana. At a western governors' meeting, the governors and Clinton administration officials agreed to lobby Congress for \$2.8 billion for fire prevention. Thus, wildland fire prevention became a national priority. Included in these budgets were monies for prescribed burns as well as mechanical fuel treatment.

Recent Kootenai County Fire Statistics

The National Fire Incident Reporting System compiles information on types of fires by fire district. Table 3 below indicates the number of vegetation fires and forest or wildland fires from 1996 to those that have occurred until the time of this report in 2002. Note that forest or wildland were not carried separately from 1996 to 1999. Also, there may have been only one department reporting in the new version of the system in 1999. Although early years would indicate an ever increasing number of fires, the past three years suggest stabilization. Lightning causes 70% of the wildfires in the National Forest. Humans cause 70% of the wildfires in the wildland urban interface zone (Kootenai County 2001).

Table 3

**FOREST/WILDLAND AND VEGETATIVE FIRES IN
KOOTENAI COUNTY 1996-2002**

Year	Vegetative Fire	Forest/Wildland Fire
1996	180	
1997	181	
1998	224	
1999	266	6
2000	161	21
2001	239	19
2002	11	3

Source: National Fire Incident Reporting System